



# LIFE – Legal Information for Everyone | A PLE Toolbox

Resources for lawyers and paralegals delivering Public Legal Education in Ontario

## BUILDING LEGAL CAPABILITY TAKES MORE THAN INFORMATION

Public Legal Education is an opportunity to cultivate positive interactions with the justice system, as well as provide information about legal rights.

Research conducted in the United Kingdom concludes that Legal Capability consists of three components: Skills, Attitudes and

Knowledge. Although in the current internet-based, data-heavy culture, it is easy to put most of the emphasis on the knowledge part of the equation, providing people with more facts about legal rights and processes, without the skills and appropriate attitudes about the justice system, makes it difficult to use this information.

### Skills

We often take for granted the skills involved in resolving a conflict. The ability to identify the issue, articulate interests, consider opposing perspectives or question various solutions are all necessary to correctly identify the type of legal problem we face, and find the help we need to overcome it. Perseverance to see a complaint through to completion was also identified as a necessary skill.

Experiential programs aim to integrate people's interest in their rights, with opportunities to practice their skills advocating for someone else. Participating in conversations with members of the justice system, their attitudes may be altered

or challenged. Mock hearings, dialogues, and interactive scenarios allow people to experience various aspects of the

**KNOWLEDGE, A CRITICAL THIRD COMPONENT OF LEGAL CAPABILITY, SHOULD ARGUABLY BE THE THIRD STEP, RATHER THAN THE FIRST STEP IN JUSTICE EDUCATION. BUILDING THE SKILLS AND ATTITUDES TO USE THAT KNOWLEDGE MUST COME FIRST.**

### Attitudes

The attitudes necessary for legal capability include both attitudes about the justice system, and attitudes about oneself. Those with a deep mistrust of authority, or those who believe the system is biased, racist or exclusionary, do not have confidence that their claim will be fairly heard. These attitudes are real barriers to trusting and participating in the justice system.

justice system and imagine themselves either successfully navigating their own conflict, and pursuing legal help.

### Knowledge

Information about one's rights is a critical element to knowing if legal recourse is appropriate. In addition, individuals need to know about the process, timelines, assistance available and other possible remedies.

### LEGAL CAPABILITY SKILLS

- Consider all Perspectives
- Listen
- Keep organized documents
- Communicate your experiences
- Talk to Experts
- Evaluate Sources
- Empathize with Others
- Be Curious
- Take Responsibility
- Acknowledge Mistakes
- Accept Uncertainty